

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-11 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAM-01 SAJ-01 SAB-01 /083 W

----- 030319

R 090707Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8523

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AEMBASSY DAMASCUS 302

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 0281

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, XF

SUBJ: SOVIET VIEWS ON MIDDLE EAST

1. SUMMARY AND COMMENT. IN CALL BY POL COUNSELOR
JANUARY 8, MFA NE COUNTRIES DIVISION DEPUTY DIRECTOR
PYRLIN DISCUSSED SOVIET ATTITUDES TOWARD UNSC PRO-
CEEDINGS, GUARANTEES FOR ISRAEL, AND VISIT OF
FORMER JORDANIAN PM RIFA'I TO MOSCOW IN DECEMBER.
SOVIETS HOPE TO PLAY ACTIVE ROLE BUT EXPECT NOTHING
SPECTACULAR IN UNSC, HE SAID, AND STRESSED THAT AT
THIS POINT LACK OF UNITY IN ARAB POSITIONS MAKES
SITUATION VERY UNCLEAR. HE CLAIMED SOVIETS WANT
CONFIRMATION OF "ALL RELEVANT" UN RESOLUTIONS RATHER
THAN ANY REVISION OF SC RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338,
WHICH STILL RETAIN THEIR VALIDITY. ON GUARANTEES
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FOR ISRAEL, PYRLIN'S REMARKS SUGGESTED SOVIET

THINGING HAS NOT GONE MUCH BEYOND GENERALLY FAVORING GUARANTEES, MAINLY IN UN FRAMEWORK, IN PRINCIPLE. DISCUSSION OF RIFA'I VISIT PROJECTED IMAGE OF GOOD ATMOSPHERE WITHOUT MUCH SUBSTANCE, BUT TENDED CORROBORATE REPORTS THAT JORDAN HAD TURNED DOWN IDEA OF INCLUDING PLO ON JORDANIAN MEPC DELEGATION. IN GENERAL, PYRLIN APPEARED TO WANT TO LEAVE IMPRESSION THAT AT THIS POINT SOVIETS ARE STILL PLAYING UNSC DEBATE BY EAR AND WAITING FOR ARAB INITIATIVES, WITHOUT ANY SPECIAL DESIRE TO SEE PROCEEDINGS DEGENERATE INTO PROPAGANDA SPECTACULAR. HE MADE SPECIAL POINT OF LEAVING DOOR OPEN FOR ISRAEL'S PARTICIPATION. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

2. UNSC DEBATE. ON GENERAL CONTEXT OF DEBATE, PYRLIN SAID SOVIETS EXPECTED NOTHING SPECTACULAR, BUT HOPE TO PLAY AND "ACTIVE" ROLE AND WANTED PROGRESS TOWARD A SETTLEMENT. AT THE SAME TIME, ARAB POSITIONS WERE NOT UNIFIED AND SOVIETS HAVE NOT YET SEEN ANY PROPOSED ARAB RESOLUTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION IN THE DEBATE. LIBYA IS THE ONLY ARAB SC MEMBER, PYRLIN POINTED OUT, AND SOVIETS DO NOT KNOW WHAT ROLE LIBYAN REPRESENTATIVE WILL PLAY. THERE HAVE STILL BEEN NO "IDEAS" PUT FORWARD ON HOW UNITY MIGHT BE BROUGHT ABOUT, BUT PERHAPS THE FIRST FEW DAYS' DEBATE WOULD CLARIFY THE SITUATION, PYRLIN SAID.

3. ON SUBSTANCE, PYRLIN ASSERTED THE SOVIETS INTEND TO STRESS TWO POINTS: THE NEED FOR A) RECONVENING MEPC WITH PARTICIPATION FROM THE BEGINNING OF ALL INTERESTED PARTIES, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIANS REPRESENTED BY THE PLO; AND B) HAVING ALL RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS CONFIRMED.

4. ASKED WHETHER THIS MEANS THAT SOVIETS DO NOT DESIRE ANY REVISION OF RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338, PYRLIN SAID THIS COULD NOT BE RULED OUT BUT THERE WERE STILL NO CONCRETE PROPOSALS TO THIS EFFECT FROM THE ARAB SIDE. THE USSR WAS AWAITING PROPOSALS FROM THE

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SYRIANS AND OTHERS AND COULD ONLY TAKE ACTION WHEN THESE WERE RECEIVED. ACCORDING TO PYRLIN SOME ARAB FOREIGN MINISTERS, INCLUDING KHADDAM, WOULD BE COMING TO NEW YORK FOR THE DEBATE, BUT IT WAS STILL NOT CLEAR WHETHER ARAFAT WOULD TAKE PART. FOR THEIR PART, THE SOVIETS REMAIN COMMITTED TO BOTH RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338, AND WANT THEM BOTH IMPLEMENTED TO MOVE MATTERS TOWARD PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT, PYRLIN SAID. HE

COMMENTED FURTHER THAT SYRIA FOUND 338 EASIER TO SUPPORT THAN 242, BUT NOTED THAT LAST PARAGRAPH OF 338 CONTAINS REFERENCE TO NECESSITY OF IMPLEMENTING 242.

5. PYRLIN SAID HE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER THE DEBATE WOULD BE LOW-KEY OR ANGRY. ISRAELI REFUSAL TO TAKE PART, HE SAID, WOULD TEND TO DIRECT ALL ARAB CRITICISMS AT THE U.S., WHICH OF NECESSITY WILL BECOME ISRAELI DEFENDER. IF ISRAEL HAD AGREED TO ATTEND, SESSION WOULD BE MORE LIKE THAT OF JUNE 1973 WHEN ISRAELI REP TEKOAH TOOK BRUNT OF DEBATE AND AMBASSADOR SCALI REMAINED IN BACKGROUND. IN THIS REGARD, PYRLIN SAID THAT ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON HAD CHARACTERIZED ISRAELI DECISION NOT TO ATTEND AS EMOTIONAL RATHER THAN PRACTICAL DURING RECENT MEETING WITH SOVIET DCM VORONTSOV. ISRAELI ABSENCE WAS ONE MAJOR PROBLEM NOT YET CLEAR, SAID PYRLIN. THE OTHER WAS SHAPE OF DRAFT RESOLUTION, FOR WHICH NO IDEAS ARE YET IN PLAY.

6. ASKED ABOUT EGYPTIAN POSITION, PYRLIN SAID AMBASSADOR POLYAKOV HAD REPORTED YESTERDAY THAT EGYPTIANS ARE STILL UNDECIDED HOW TO PROCEED, AND ARE CONSULTING WITH OTHER PARTIES, AS THEY HAD WITH AMBASSADOR EILTS BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE FOR U.S. THE EGYPTIANS, PYRLIN SAID, WOULD LIKE TO FOLLOW A COMMON ARAB POSITION, BUT THIS WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO DO BECAUSE OF THE SINAI AGREEMENT AND CAIRO'S TIES WITH OTHERS, INCLUDING U.S. HE NOTED THAT SOVIET-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS HAD IMPROVED SOMEWHAT LATELY AND THAT, OTHER THAN SCATTERED NEWSPAPER ARTICLES, EGYPTIAN CRITICISM OF THE USSR HAD BEEN TONED DOWN.
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7. WITH REGARD TO SYRIA, PYRLIN SAID HE THOUGHT DAMASCUS WANTED TO SEE ALL THE DETAILS OF THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION DISCUSSED, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM. DURING THE UNGA SESSION, IT WAS THE SYRIANS WHO HAD THE IDEA OF A SPECIAL COMMITTEE FOR PALESTINIAN AFFAIRS, BUT THERE HAD NEVER BEEN ANY CONCRETE PROPOSALS AS TO WHAT SUCH A COMMITTEE WOULD DISCUSS OR WHICH COUNTRIES WOULD BE ON IT. NOT ALL PROBLEMS WOULD BE SOLVED AT THE UNSC,

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INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAM-01 SAB-01 SAJ-01 /083 W
----- 030137

R 090707Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8525
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMEMBASSY LONDON
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PYRLIN REMARKED JOVIALY. IN ANY CASE, COMMON SYRIAN-EGYPTIAN POSITION WOULD BE HARD TO WORK OUT, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF SYRIAN CRITICISM OF SINAI II. HE CITED IN THIS REGARD RECENT INTERVIEW WITH ASAD BY ARNAUD DE BORCHGRAVE IN NEWSWEEK AND NOTED ASAD'S PERSONAL CRITICISM OF SADAT WHICH, HE SAID, WOULD NOT BE OVERLOOKED EASILY.

8. GUARANTEES FOR ISRAEL. ASKED ABOUT THE SOVIET POSITION ON GUARANTEES FOR THE EXISTENCE OF ALL STATES IN THE REGION INCLUDING ISRAEL (WHICH TENDS TO MOVE IN AND OUT OF SOVIET MEDIA LISINGS OF THE THREE PRINCIPLES FOR A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT--I.E., A) ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM ALL OCCUPIED
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TERRITORIES, B) RIGHT OF PALESTINIANS TO NATIONAL HOMELAND AND C) GUARANTEES), PYRLIN BEGAN WITH A RATHER FIRM STATEMENT THAT SUCH GUARANTEES COULD ONLY BE MADE AFTER ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, SINCE UNTIL THE ISRAELIS WITHDREW ONE DID NOT KNOW WHAT BORDERS WERE TO BE GUARANTEED. THE QUESTION OF WHICH BORDERS, HOWEVER, "CAN BE DISCUSSED." THE SOVIETS, HE SAID, "FAVORED" THE PRE-1967 BORDERS. AFTER DISCUSSION, HOWEVER, HE ADMITTED THAT IN PRACTICE THE ISRAELIS ARE UNLIKELY TO WITHDRAW EXCEPT TO BORDERS WHICH ARE FIRMLY GUARANTEED IN ADVANCE. ASKED ABOUT THE MECHANISM FOR GUARANTEES, PYRLIN SAID THE SOVIETS HAVE NO SPECIFIC POSITION: THEY ARE SIMPLY FOR GUARANTEES BY OTHERS OF THE EXISTENCE OF REGIONAL STATES. "OTHERS" MIGHT INCLUDE THE UN, THE SC, OR SOMETHING "IN THE UN FRAMEWORK." HE RECALLED THAT IN THE AUTUMN OF 1970 RIAD HAD PROPOSED DEALING WITH THE QUESTION OF GUARANTEES FIRST, BUT HAD GOTTEN NO SUPPORT FROM OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES ON THIS.

9. RIFA'I VISIT. PYRLIN SAID THE RECENT TALKS WITH THE JORDANIAN DELEGATION HEADED BY RIFA'I HAD BEEN "FRUITFUL, BUT IN AN ORDINARY WAY." THE BROAD-GAUGE COMPOSITION OF THE DELEGATION WAS SIGNIFICANT, HE SAID, AS WAS THE EXCELLENT ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH THE TALKS WERE CONDUCTED. THE SOVIETS NOW HOPE FOR MORE DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY WITH JORDAN, LEADING UP TO KING HUSSEIN'S VISIT WHICH WAS EXPECTED TO TAKE PLACE IN JUNE.

10. WITH REGARD TO JORDANIAN AND PLO REPRESENTATION IN MEPC, PYRLIN SAID JORDANIANS HAD MADE CLEAR THAT PER RABAT DECISION PLO HAD RESPONSIBILITY FOR NEGOTIATING ON BEHALF OF WEST BANK PALESTINIANS. AT SAME TIME, PYRLIN ADDED, JORDANIANS HAD COME FORWARD WITH "MORE MODERATE VERSION" OF KING HUSSEIN'S "OLD IDEA" THAT IF PALESTINIANS ASKED JORDAN TO REPRESENT THEM CONCERNING WEST BANK, JORDAN COULD NOT TURN THEM DOWN.

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1. SOVIETS HAD BEEN STRUCK BY HOW MUCH CLOSER JORDAN HAD MOVED TO SYRIAN POSITION, PYRLIN SAID. RIFA'I, FOR EXAMPLE, HAD STRONGLY CONDEMNED SINAI II AS "BLOW TO ARAB UNITY" DURING TALKS WITH THE SOVIETS. HE ALSO HAD IMPRESSION PM ZAID/RIFA'I WAS RIGHT WHEN HE SAID JORDANIAN-PALESTINIAN

RELATIONS HAD MOVED FROM MINUS TO ZERO. WHILE EVERY PALESTINIAN FACTION WAS AGAINST JORDAN'S REPRESENTING THE PALESTINIANS, AND SOME LEFTIST FACTIONS STILL TALK ABOUT JORDAN AS PART OF PALESTINE, PYRLIN NOTED THAT THE PALESTINIANS AS A GROUP ARE COMING TO SEE THE NEED TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH JORDAN.

12. PYRLIN IS LEAVING FOR NEW YORK JANUARY 11 AND WILL BE MEMBER OF SOVIET TEAM TAKING PART IN DEBATE. HE WILL ALSO SPEND SOME TIME IN WASHINGTON CONFERRING WITH DOBRYNIN AND VORONTSOV. SUGGEST DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS DEALING WITH MIDDLE EAST MIGHT FIND IT USEFUL TO HAVE DISCUSSION WITH PYRLIN DURING HIS TRIP TO THE U.S.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, UNGA RESOLUTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MOSCOW00281
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760008-0138
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760171/aaaacInx.tel
Line Count: 293
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19 APR 2004 by SmithRJ>; APPROVED <16 AUG 2004 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOVIET VIEWS ON MIDDLE EAST
TAGS: PFOR, UR, XF, UNSC
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006